

Field voucher specimens

Introduction

Representative plant or animal specimens (vouchers) often need to be collected during biological field work, and should be considered in the planning stages of a project. Vouchers may be required for a number of reasons, including to:

- confirm identification at time of collection and after taxonomic revisions
- provide genetic material
- confirm significant records
- provide South Australia's permanent collections with preserved material for taxonomic investigations now and in the future.

It is common for plant or animal voucher specimens to be requested as a condition for [Scientific Research Permit](#) or Animal Ethics approval (refer to Wildlife Ethics Committee – [Collection of voucher specimens policy](#)). Vouchers should be lodged with the State Herbarium of SA (plants) or the South Australian Museum (animals). These institutions need to be consulted prior to any field work for advice on what specimens are considered necessary. If [threatened species](#) are involved, this should be outlined in the Scientific Research Permit application in case any conditions apply.

The value of a specimen depends on two major factors:

- Preparation of the material
- Accuracy and appropriateness of associated data.

Specimen preparation

Detailed instructions on collection and field preparation of plant and animal voucher specimens can be provided by the [State Herbarium of SA](#) and the [SA Museum](#).

The procedures have also been described in the Biological Survey Manuals on the department's website:

- [Vegetation survey manual](#)
- [Vertebrate survey manual](#)

Data management

Vouchers are of limited use if they are not linked to accurate and appropriate data. Once specimens have been registered with an institution they are assigned an official registration number. This may occur weeks, or even years, after the field collection was made, so a [Field Voucher Number](#) is the best way to link the specimen to its data in the short term. Field Voucher Numbers may take various forms, however it is critical that each is unique. They must also be durable (especially to liquids) and practical for field use. The department can be provided advice on preferred options for plant and animal voucher numbers.

Field voucher labels/tags are attached to the specimen in the field at the same time as the associated data is recorded. The unique voucher number is written onto a datasheet against the data. Standard voucher labels are available.

As well as ensuring the specimen is linked to its data, it is also important to collect appropriate field data in a consistent and accurate format. For an explanation of the minimum information required, refer to the [Minimum Dataset Standards Information Sheet](#).

A Field Voucher Number, with a corresponding Museum/Herbarium Registration Number, also allows a record to be linked between different databases (e.g. ADHERB and BDBSA). This greatly simplifies the ongoing maintenance of taxonomy and data and detection of duplicates across different systems.

The information is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.



To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

© Crown in right of the State of South Australia, Department for Environment and Water

For more information

Department for Environment and Water

Email: DEWBioDataSupport@sa.gov.au

